

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Woodline Inc

West Virginia Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Woodline Embraces Lean Manufacturing To Improve Operations

Client Profile:

Woodline, Inc. is a manufacturer of decorative wood accent pieces for the home. The company manufactures hundreds of different items, primarily from pine lumber, and either sells to distributors servicing large retail stores or markets its products directly to other businesses. Established in 1993, Woodline employs 25 people in Upper Tract, West Virginia.

Situation:

Woodline has been operating from its current location for several years, with a relatively unchanged manufacturing process and flow. After experiencing problems achieving sufficient production volume to meet customer needs, the owner and plant manager felt they needed more knowledge about managing a manufacturing operation and identifying areas for improvement. The company contacted the West Virginia Manufacturing Extension Partnership (WVMEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for assistance.

Solution:

WVMEP developed a seven-day training and implementation package for Woodline. This package was split into four separate sessions, each addressing different areas of manufacturing management and lean manufacturing concepts. In Session One, WVMEP worked with Woodline to help it understand cycle times and line balancing, takt times, scheduling, and costing. Session Two focused on work and quality standards, and product tracking. Session Three concentrated on workplace organization and involved 5S training and projects. Finally, Session Four dealt with layout and process flow, cellular manufacturing, and additional line balancing.

WVMEP divided each session between classroom instruction and implementation activity on the shop floor. The goal was to show a significant improvement in at least one area of the plant or in one manufacturing concept after each training session, and together WVMEP and Woodline achieved this goal. After each session, WVMEP held a planning discussion to decide any changes or additions that needed to be made prior to the next session. By working closely with Woodline during these sessions, WVMEP was able to address the company's most pressing needs with on-site consultation and hands-on demonstrations. After completing each training activity, the plant manager possessed the documents, techniques, and knowledge to apply the concepts to his operation, and had participated in a live demonstration of how to implement these

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concepts. The plant manager and his supervisor also attended a Lean 101 training simulation during this time frame.

Results:

Trained all Woodline employees in lean manufacturing concepts and implementation techniques.

Increased production rate by 170 percent on a redesigned and balanced product line.

Created work instructions, quality instructions, and a product manual.

Secured a large, multi-year contract with a major crafts retailer.

Anticipate significant sales growth as a result of new contracts.

Testimonial:

"Working with the West Virginia Manufacturing Extension Partnership has been not only an eye opener, but also one of the highlights of my years in business. They have been there when we needed them, offering hands on and a personal approach to manufacturing solutions."

Chuck Dow, President